

# HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's (and next week's) question:

Someone has an electric coffee maker plugged in for the duration of *Yomtov* on a timer. May water be added before the timer turns it on? Assuming this is permitted on *Yomtov*, may this be done on *Erev Shabbos* as well, so the coffee will brew on *Shabbos*? If it is not permitted to do this to make coffee, may it be done to protect the appliance from heating up with no water in it? May one remove the 'on' pin from the timer while it has the appliance switched off to prevent it from turning the appliance on? Does preparation of an *Eruv Tavshilin* help in this situation in any way?

The issues:

- A) *Melechtes Ochel Nefesh*, *melacha* involved in the preparation of food on *Yomtov*
- B) *Chamin Shehuchmu Beshabbos*, using water heated on *Shabbos* by a timer

In next issue:

- C) Cooking with electricity on *Yomtov*
- D) *Muktzeh* and moving it indirectly; *Tikun Kli*, what counts as repairing
- E) *Eruv Tavshilin*

## A) *Melechtes Ochel Nefesh*

The Torah permits those *melachos* that are needed to prepare food on *Yomtov*. The thirty-nine *melachos* are series of activities. Some only permit those series that pertain directly to food preparation. This would exclude cheese curdling, sub-category of *boneh*, building, which is not part of the food series. Others permit any *melacha* directly involved in the preparation of food. Indirect *melachos*, such as harvesting the produce, are called *machshirei ochel nefesh*. In many cases, the issue for these *melachos* is whether they could have been done before *Yomtov*. For example, grinding strong spices is an earlier stage in the preparation than cooking or even kneading the dough. However, if it is done the day before the spices will lose their flavor. On the other hand, picking the fruit or reaping the grain need not be done immediately before processing the food. Others consider some *melachos* forbidden in a class of their own, as *melechtes avoda*, hard work. These were never permitted for *ochel nefesh*.

Most poskim rule that *melechtes ochel nefesh* may be done immediately prior to eating, even if they could have been prepared in advance. Some poskim disagree. The prevailing practice is to do these *melachos* with a *shinuy*, in an unusual manner.

Burning, and carrying, have an added leniency. Since these *melachos* are used for other purposes besides cooking, the permissibility given by the Torah is applied to other uses for the fire. The other uses must be a need for *Yomtov*, at least in a small way. In addition, many poskim require the need to be related to bodily benefit. Thus, one may heat a room, warm up water to wash (though not the entire body), and kindle lights. Extinguishing can also qualify when it is needed to facilitate the preparation of food.

When burning is permitted, a separate issue arises when creating a new flame. *Molid aish*, making a fire where none existed before is forbidden even on *Yomtov*. One may only expand an existing fire, or take a flame from it. Thus using a pilot is fine, as is taking a flame from a candle. Striking a match or its electrical equivalent is forbidden. Lowering a flame is compared to extinguishing by some. It deprives the fire of its fuel. It is forbidden to remove oil from a lamp. Others contend that in an oil lamp the entire pool of oil is connected to the flame and feeding it. In a gas stove, the flame needs to be fed by a constant flow of fresh gas. Thus, restricting the flow is not considered extinguishing.

The principle permitting other uses of these *melachos* is called *mitoch*. There are many details involved in this. The most important are that the *melacha* is somewhat needed for *Yomtov*, and that the need is quite universal. A need that is only appreciated by a few people does not count. In our case, assuming that the water will not be used on *Shabbos*, as we shall see, the issue could be whether saving the appliance from being ruined or damaged qualifies for this. [See Beitza 12b 28b 33a-b, Megilah 7b Kesubos 7a, Poskim. Tur Sh. Ar. OC 495:1 502:1 504 510 511:1, commentaries.]

#### **B) Chamin Shehuchnu Beshabbos; Use of a Timer**

Food may not be cooked on *Shabbos* at all. On *Erev Shabbos*, one may not set up an arrangement to cook something on *Shabbos*. This involves various Rabbinic decrees, including the concern that one might help the cooking process after *Shabbos* has begun. This should affect whether one may arrange for food to be cooked automatically before *Shabbos*. However, in some circumstances one may set the food up to cook by itself. These include the use of a '*blech*' that is prevalent today, and, according to many, other forms of 'reminder' that would prevent slipping into a *melacha*.

Generally, there are restrictions on benefit from a *melacha*. This could also apply if a decree forbidding setting it up on *Erev Shabbos* was violated. The details of how long and for whom this applies are beyond the scope of this issue. If no *melacha* was performed, such as if it was done in a perfectly legitimate way by a gentile, this restriction does not apply. In the same way, if it happened automatically it should not apply. As we shall see, the additional restrictions could also apply to timers, but in our case, most of them should not be present. However, if the item was water, a new issue arises. The Rabbis forbade use of water heated on *Shabbos*. This is usually understood as part of the aforementioned restriction. People would bathe on *Shabbos* in hot baths. The attendant had to have warm water from before *Shabbos*, but might have heated it on *Shabbos*. Therefore, they decreed against using water heated on *Shabbos* for any purpose.

The men of *Teveriah* put a pipe of cold water through the local hot springs before *Shabbos*, and used the water that was heated on *Shabbos*. The aforementioned decree was applied to this case. It should also apply to water heated by a timer. Many poskim maintain that the issue in that case was *hatmanah*, keeping food warm. This applies when the water is totally immersed in the heating source. In our case, the water is heated by a small element. The scholars of Frankfurt devised a way to heat water for *Shabbos* morning coffee. They lit a long fuse on *Erev Shabbos*, that would reach their urn and kindle the fire under it on *Shabbos* morning. This raised a controversy. Part of the issue was the concern that a *melacha* might be done to help the cooking. Later commentators, justifying the rationale, suggest that there was probably a *blech* under the pot. Others suggest that the

elaborate arrangement itself was a 'reminder'. An electric timer is at least as good. The Frankfurt model had a fire on from the beginning of *Shabbos*, raising the concern that all the time one might check on it. It is possible that the fire was not covered, while the electric element here is covered. It seems that the *Frankfurt* men were brewing coffee, which benefits from stirring. Plain water does not gain from being stirred.

The poskim discuss using a timer to heat water in an urn. Among their concerns are the usual precautionary decrees to prevent helping the cooking. There is also a concern that some water might be removed before the entire pot is heated. This helps to heat the remaining water sooner. A coffee maker has no controls that make a difference in the cooking. The water usually cooks in a way that does not leave the possibility to remove some before it finishes boiling. By setting the timer to go on the next morning, it would appear that the issues of helping the process would not arise in the minds of the users.

Timers in general are also discussed. Two issues arise. The first touches on the issue of having a *melacha* performed automatically on *Shabbos*. This applies, by and large, to making the arrangements on *Shabbos*. It can also arise when doing this on *Erev Shabbos*. Second, may one do anything to adjust the controls while the appliance is turned off. The second issue will be discussed in section D.

The first issue is a matter of debate. Two kinds of situation come up. By adjusting the timer on *Shabbos*, one might cause the electricity to be extinguished, or even to be ignited, early. The second arises when the timer is attached to an appliance that is not performing a function at the present. By placing food or the like that in or on the appliance, one causes it to be cooked (or washed or the like) later, when the timer turns it on. In one view, apart from the issue of tampering with the controls, the entire issue is *grama*, causing a *melacha* to take place indirectly. *Grama* is discussed by the Talmud in regard to extinguishing a fire. One might place new or used earthen vessels around it, that may or may not be filled with water. One might place a pan of water beneath a lamp to catch sparks (small bits of oil or wick that are aflame). In some cases these are forbidden. Some say that there is never an issue of a Scriptural violation. True *grama* is never forbidden Scripturally, but is sometimes forbidden Rabbinically. The issues include whether the flames will be extinguished immediately at the time of placing, and whether the person will be tempted at the time to extinguish it manually. In both cases, the flames are already present. In the case of a timer, if the appliance is off, the 'flames' are not present. If it is on, but the timer is adjusted to turn it off earlier than previously planned, there is still no concern that one will manually turn it off immediately, unless this is what one wants. Thus, there could be a difference when the timer is adjusted to extinguish. As long as one adjusts it for a later time, there should be no such concern.

If one is not even adjusting the timer, but placing a pot on a stove that is off, or in our case adding water to an urn or coffee maker, it is an issue of *grama* of cooking. This alone would not be forbidden Scripturally. As mentioned, even the Rabbinical issues might not apply. It should compare favorably with permissible forms of *Grama*. Many poskim maintain that permissible *grama* only applies to cases of potential loss. Our case could be compared to the cases of loss, if the concern is only to prevent damage to the appliance. However, the other issues involved in cooking still apply. These are the prohibitions that apply to returning a pot to the fire, or placing it there first on *Shabbos*. They

also apply on *Erev Shabbos*, if the food is not fully cooked and the 'flame' is not covered. The reason for leniency in our case would be, firstly, that water does not need to be stirred, and secondly that one could consider the coffee pot a 'concealed flame'.

At the opposite extreme, there is a view that timers raise two problems. First one must analyze the concept of *grama*. Some *melachos* may be started on *Erev Shabbos*, though they will be completed on *Shabbos*, for example, guiding water to a garden. The action of the *melacha* ends when it is done, on *Erev Shabbos*. What if the action is delayed? One starts by doing the first part of the action, but nothing happens until a later action takes place. If a murderer binds his victim, then leaves him where the sun will eventually come and cause the death, he has not completed his action with the binding. Regardless of liability, whether for murder or for *melacha*, this can not be included in the same category as other *melachos* done on *Erev Shabbos*. If one sets the timer to go on during *Shabbos*, the *melacha* action has not fully taken place on *Erev Shabbos*. Though it is basically *grama*, it is more like arranging a *melacha* by asking a gentile to do it. This is forbidden Rabbinnically. Second, the Rabbis forbid activities that lead to taking *Shabbos* or *Yomtov* lightly. Though they singled out activities included in this, anything that causes this should be included. Furthermore, these activities violate the positive Prophetic *mitzvah* to honor *Shabbos*. Thus, though this specific case could not be part of an existing Rabbinical ordinance, it would anyhow be forbidden as part of these general prohibitions. The main objection to this view is that we are not in a position to enact or extend the decrees of *Chaza"l*. However, the source for this idea is also debated.

A middle view permits timers in and of themselves, in keeping with the majority of recent poskim and the prevailing practice. However, placing food on the appliance before it turns on is part of the cooking process. While only the person igniting the fire is liable, all those involved up to that point have also violated the prohibition. Thus, *grama* would not apply here. Furthermore, on *Erev Shabbos*, too, the issues of preventing stirring apply. However, in the case of plain water, to be used for tea, this view permits it. As an extra measure, one should place a prominent sign on the appliance that reads: SHABBOS KODESH. A 'blech' is not practical in the case of a coffee maker. [See *Shabbos* 18b 34a-b 36b-39b etc., *Poskim*. *Tur Sh Ar OC* 253-4 257 318, commentaries. E.g. *Chazon Ish OC* 38:2. *Igros Moshe OC* IV:60. *Tzitz Eliezer* I:20:9 II:6-7 VII:17:2.]

*On the Parsha ... Hashem says: declare before Me verses of kingship, to crown Me over you, verses of remembering, so your mention comes up before Me, and with what – with a shofar ... [Rosh Hashanah 16a]* The only reference in Torah to any activity required on Rosh Hashanah is shofar. Yet, it seems that *shofar* is merely to cause the main items, which are crowning Hashem and bringing up our mention! This is Hashem's mercy in His judgment. *Shofar* is not merely a *grama*. By arousing ourselves physically, we become directly involved in a *mitzvah*. The action arouses us spiritually as well.

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Yitzchok a"h, whose yahrzeit is on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei. 🕯

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